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SUBJECT: UNMIS REGIONAL COORDINATOR ON THE SITUATION IN ABYEI AND
THE STATUS OF LRA PEACE TALKS

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In a July 25 meeting with ConGen Juba, UNMIS Regional Coordinator for Southern Sudan David Gressley reported that over a thousand SAF have now withdrawn from Abyei, leaving only approximately 100 in Abyei town who are expected to leave on the 26th or 27th of July. Gressley planned to travel to Abyei on the 26th to attend a ceremony to officially install the new Joint Integrated Unit (JIU) in Abyei that will now secure the town in place of the SAF. In regard to LRA peace talks, Gressley reported that Joseph Kony is still talking to the UN and GOSS Vice President Machar, but they had been unable to set a time when he would meet to discuss signing a peace treaty. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Gressley reported that he would be leaving Juba on July 26 to witness the departure of the last of the SAF forces, approximately 100 soldiers, from Abyei town. Following their departure, he will attend a turnover ceremony in which the new JIU force will take over providing security for Abyei. Although this JIU has been trained and has been ready for this assignment for the last few weeks, they have been waiting for the complete departure of the SAF before taking over their new duties.

¶3. (SBU) Gressley said that although UNMIS was ready to begin training 300 police, 150 from the North and 150 from the South, there were now disagreements between the SPLM and NCP over where to train them. The NCP wants them trained in Khartoum instead of Abyei, and the SPLM wants all the police to be issued ID cards, while the NCP only wants the police to wear patches on their shoulders identifying them as police. The SPLM opposes this because the patches will not identify individual members of the force, and can be given to others to wear.

¶4. (SBU) Also according to Gressley, there is still no progress on selecting an Administrator or Deputy for Abyei, as called for in the Road Map Agreement. In his talks with the SPLM on the issue, he said they seemed in no hurry to work out a final agreement on this issue with the NCP.

¶5. (SBU) On the issue of peace talks with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), Gressley said there was nothing new to report except that the UN negotiators continue to talk to Kony by satellite phone. There are hopes that a meeting will be arranged later next week, but Gressley admitted that he thought it was not likely. Still, he said, the plan is to continue to try to sign the peace agreement, and hopes remain that this can still be done. Kony and GOSS Vice President Machar are now also talking on the phone.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: The full implementation of the Abyei Road Map Agreement is now almost a month behind schedule, with little indication that an Administrator and Deputy will be appointed any time soon. Still, if the SAF does fully withdraw as expected and the JIU takes its place, and if the new police force gets up and running, tensions will be reduced and it is likely that IDPs will begin to return in large numbers. The presence of the SAF 31st Brigade in the heart of Abyei town, using a girls' school as a

barracks, has been a sore point for the local population for decades. Without an Administrator in place, Gressley indicated that the UN would not help or encourage returns, but as people deemed it safe to go home, there was nothing the UN could or would do to try to stop them. Post views it as critical that an administration be put in place rapidly, lest political tensions rise again as local self-appointed or party-appointed leaders in Abyei begin to agitate. We will raise this with both parties and this would be an important point for senior officials to raise during future visits to Sudan.

FERNANDEZ